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Impressions of a First-time Attendee at the Annual Conference

My impressions of my first SLA Conference in Anaheim, California were positive ones. Rather than highlighting topics covered in the General Sessions and the other programs I attended (many of which will be touched on elsewhere in this issue and in **Special Libraries**), I'd like to share my personal impressions and new insights of the profession of librarianship and the special group of people who are the membership of SLA.

Before the conference, I was able to attend a continuing education class. What I've been reading in the literature is entirely true. Continuing education courses are indeed a vital element in updating our education and training so we may better provide information services in our rapidly changing world. Having been out of library school only a year, I quickly slipped back into my student-mode, taking notes, marking up hand-outs, etc. We should never forget how to be students. There is always something for us to learn.

The General Sessions were another learning exercise. There is a lot we can learn from people who are not librarians. And, I must say, in a sweet and condensed manner. By listening carefully (don't we already do that?) to sessions like these, one can glean a lot of information that would otherwise have to be picked up by reading many articles in the library and non-library literature.

I had no idea how much energy it would take to "work" a conference. We all sat through many programs but also walked through many aisles of exhibits. The active listening and participating in conversations with others (as well as circulating through the open houses) require

effort, a kind of mental output. Perhaps some of this can be attributed to my novice status and the weight of my First Timer ribbon. Somehow I think this kind of interaction will take less and less personal energy as I become more "seasoned".

What a valuable exercise, walking the Exhibits area. Hands-on experience with new products, publications and the immediate information exchange between vendor and user can't be matched any other way.

Finally, the people had the biggest impact in making my trip to Anaheim a successful one. I was surprised to see so many academic librarians. They especially made me feel comfortable and accepted. Having worked paraprofessionally in two special libraries, I felt comfortable with the special librarians. All of us there had something in common. With that thread running through us all, conversations were easily started, roundtable discussions and workshop sessions were informative exchanges. I came away from the Conference proud of my profession and the people who are a part of it. I am confident I have made the right career choice and hope that at some time I can give back to some of my fellow librarians what they have given me. I'd like to thank the Sci-Tech Division for making it possible for me to attend this year's Conference. What a wonderful gift the Division's given me. It has been put to good use.

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